

FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOME

You have a role in food safety!

Bacteria multiply on food that is mishandled and some of these bacteria may cause disease. By making sure the food you buy and prepare remains safe, you can play an important role in reducing the risks of foodborne illness.

Buyer is aware!

Examine food and its packaging at the store – if it leaks, have it repackaged and again at home. Avoid swollen or leaking cans, or damaged packages – they may expose the contents to bacteria.

When shopping select perishable foods last and put them away at home first, surface bacteria begin to multiply as soon as food surfaces warm.

Store it right!

Keep the temperature of your refrigerator at 40°F or below. Keep the temperature of the freezer at 0°F or below.

Keep it clean!

Always clean your hands, utensils and cooking surfaces thoroughly. Wash your hands with soap and hot water before you handle food, repeatedly while you prepare food, and again when you've finished. Clean (soap and hot water) and sanitize (bleach and water) cutting boards and utensils after use.

Clean (soap and hot water) and sanitize (bleach and water) countertops, cutting boards and utensils with a bleach solution of (1 tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon of water). This will kill surface bacteria.

When in doubt, throw it out!

Examine food carefully immediately before you use it.

Look for damaged, packaging, obvious mold growth, discoloration and any unusual odors, feel and texture.

Make sure it is thawed right!

The best way to thaw foods is to do so in the refrigerator. If unable to do so, thawing in cold running water or in a microwave oven is also acceptable. Thawing at room temperature is unsafe because surface bacteria begin to multiply as soon as the surface warms.

Cook foods right!

Prepare foods quickly, cook them thoroughly and serve them immediately. Don't let potentially hazardous (unsafe) foods sit out at room temperatures where bacteria can grow. The "danger zone" is between 40°F and 140°F.

Don't spread it around!

Keep certain foods, like meats and their juices, separated from others during storage and preparation.

Rinse and sanitize dishtowels often and use separate dishtowels for each part of the kitchen (one for each counter) so as not to spread bacteria. It is always best to use disposable paper towels in the kitchen. Keep a separate cutting board for meats and poultry products.

Keep foods covered. Flies, and other insects or accidental splashing during preparation of other foods can introduce bacteria or other harmful substances.